Glass microscope slides were purchased from Fisher scientific. Slides were cut into approximately 5 x 15 mm pieces, using a diamond tipped scribing pen. Slides were cleaned by soaking for 20 minutes in a solution of 4:1 H_2SO_4:H_2O_2 at 50°C. Slides were then rinsed with copious amounts of water, then ethanol, and dried under a stream of dry nitrogen. To functionalize the slide surface with a thiol terminated silane, the slides were soaked in a degassed ethanolic 1% (by volume) mercaptopropyl-trimethoxysilane solution for 12 hours. The slides were removed from the ethanol solutions and rinsed with ethanol, then water. Nanoparticles were adsorbed onto the thiol terminated surface of the slides by soaking in solutions containing the 13 nm diameter gold nanoparticles (preparation described in Example 1). After 12 hours in the colloidal solutions, the slides were removed and rinsed with water. The resulting slides have a pink appearance due to the adsorbed nanoparticles and exhibit similar UV-vis absorbance profiles (surface plasmon absorbance peak at 520 nm) as the aqueous gold nanoparticle colloidal solutions. See Figure 14A.

DNA was attached to the nanoparticle modified surface by soaking the glass slides in 0.2 OD (1.7 µM) solution containing freshly purified 3' thiol oligonucleotide (3' thiol ATGCTCAACTCT [SEQ ID NO:33]) (synthesized as described in Examples 1 and 3). After 12 hours of soaking time, the slides were removed and rinsed with water.

To demonstrate the ability of an analyte DNA strand to bind nanoparticles to the modified substrate, a linking oligonucleotide was prepared. The linking oligonucleotide (prepared as described in Example 2) was 24 bp long (5' TACGAGTTGAGAATCCTGAATGCG [SEQ ID NO:34]) with a sequence containing a 12 bp end that was complementary to the DNA already adsorbed onto the substrate surface (SEQ ID NO:33). The substrate was then soaked in a hybridization buffer (0.5 M NaCl, 10 mM phosphate buffer pH 7) solution containing the linking oligonucleotide (0.4 OD, 1.7 µM) for 12 hours. After removal and rinsing with similar buffer, the substrate was soaked in a solution containing 13 nm diameter gold nanoparticles which had been modified with an oligonucleotide (TAGGACTTACGC 5' thiol [SEQ ID NO:35]) (prepared as described in Example 3) that is complementary to the unhybridized portion of the linking

oligonucleotide attached to the substrate. After 12 hours of soaking, the substrate was removed and rinsed with the hybridization buffer. The substrate color had darkened to a purple color and the UV-vis absorbance at 520 nm approximately doubled (Figure 14A).

To verify that the oligonucleotide modified gold nanoparticles were attached to the oligonucleotide/nanoparticle modified surface through DNA hybridization interactions with the linking oligonucleotide, a melting curve was performed. For the melting experiment, the substrate was placed in a cuvette containing 1 mL of hybridization buffer and the same apparatus used in Example 2, part B, was used. The absorbance signal due to the nanoparticles (520 nm) was monitored as the temperature of the substrate was increased at a rate of 0.5°C per minute. The nanoparticle signal dramatically dropped when the temperature passed 60°C. See Figure 14B. A first derivative of the signal showed a melting temperature of 62°C, which corresponds with the temperature seen for the three DNA sequences hybridized in solution without nanoparticles. See Figure 14B.

Example 7: <u>Assays Using Nanoparticle-Oligonucleotide Conjugates</u>

The detection system illustrated in Figures 15A-G was designed so that the two probes 1 and 2 align in a tail-to-tail fashion onto a complementary target 4 (see Figures 15A-G). This differs from the system described in Example 5 where the two probes align contiguously on the target strand (see Figures 12A-F).

The oligonucleotide-gold nanoparticle conjugates 1 and 2 illustrated in Figures 15A-G were prepared as described in Example 3, except that the nanoparticles were redispersed in hybridization buffer (0.3 M NaCl, 10 mM phosphate, pH 7). The final nanoparticle-oligonucleotide conjugate concentration was estimated to be 13 nM by measuring the reduction in intensity of the surface plasmon band at 522 nm which gives rise to the red color of the nanoparticles. The oligonucleotide targets illustrated in Figures 15A-G were purchased from the Northwestern University Biotechnology Facility, Evanston, IL.

When 150 µL of hybridization buffer containing 13 nM oligonucleotide-nanoparticle conjugates 1 and 2 was mixed with 60 picomoles (6 µL) of target 4, the solution color

immediately changed from red to purple. This color change occurs as a result of the formation of large oligonucleotide-linked polymeric networks of gold nanoparticles, which leads to a red shift in the surface plasmon resonance of the nanoparticles. When the solution was allowed to stand for over 2 hours, precipitation of large macroscopic aggregates was observed. A 'melting analysis' of the solution with the suspended aggregates was performed. To perform the 'melting analysis', the solution was diluted to 1 ml with hybridization buffer, and the optical signature of the aggregates at 260 nm was recorded at one minute intervals as the temperature was increased from 25°C to 75°C, with a holding time of 1 minute/degree. Consistent with characterization of the aggregate as an oligonucleotide-nanoparticle polymer, a characteristic sharp transition (full width at half maximum, $FW_{1/2}$ of the first derivative = 3.5°C) was observed with a "melting temperature" (T_m) of 53.5°C. This compares well with the T_m associated with the broader transition observed for oligonucleotides without nanoparticles (T_m = 54°C, $FW_{1/2}$ = ~13.5°C). The 'melting analysis' of the oligonucleotide solution without nanoparticles was performed under similar conditions as the analysis with nanoparticles, except that the temperature was increased from 10-80 °C. Also, the solution was 1.04 μM in each oligonucleotide component.

To test the selectivity of the system, the T_m for the aggregate formed from the perfect complement 4 of probes 1 and 2 was compared with the T_m's for aggregates formed from targets that contained one base mismatches, deletions, or insertions (Figures 15A-G). Significantly, all of the gold nanoparticle-oligonucleotide aggregates that contained imperfect targets exhibited significant, measurable destabilization when compared to the aggregates formed from the perfect complement, as evidenced by T_m values for the various aggregates (see Figures 15A-G). The solutions containing the imperfect targets could easily be distinguished from the solution containing the perfect complement by their color when placed in a water bath held at 52.5°C. This temperature is above the T_m of the mismatched polynucleotides, so only the solution with the perfect target exhibited a purple color at this temperature. A 'melting analysis' was also performed on the probe solution which contained